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There will be no place to run and hide oneself; it will be woe and pain without comfort, particularly for the repenting sinners. They will see the anger of God, full of rage and wrath, bearing the woe of revenge.[39]

Also the folk religious poetry began to emphasize the gloomy aspects of *post-mortem* life, especially that of the *Strashny Sud*—The Terrible Judgment. It was perhaps in such conditions that Destiny, together with the Truth, became dissociated from the idea of a supreme Justice that reigned everywhere and came to be looked upon as being subject to the caprice of arbitrary and uncontrollable forces that now dominated the Universe.

Such circumstances might have meant quick disintegration of this society, not unlike the rapid dissolution of the Turco-Mongol empires, had it not been for agents that favored the stabilization and the perpetuation of this social system in spite of its internal weaknesses. One of the most important instruments in this process of social consolidation was the Byzantine Church.

5
THE BYZANTINE CHURCH AND MUSCOVITE MILITARY THEOCRACY

I

FOLLOWING the traditions established by the Roman Caesars, the Emperor of Byzantium (Basileus) was looked upon as the supreme war-lord, the sole legislator, and the chief justice, as well as the universal ruler. Therefore, the Church, which was subjected to the absolute and autocratic will of the Emperor, developed a religious ideology in accordance with the dominant political philosophy and practices of the Empire.

The Emperor assumed the duty of defending the Church, combating heresy, and spreading Orthodox faith throughout all the globe. In return, God had promised him universal dominion

1 [Cf. ref. 11b, pp. 52-55.--Analyst]

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795 771 •779 643 over the whole earth.[1] Through the support of the Church the absolute power of the Emperor became sacred, all-comprising and omnipresent. In the proclamation which announced his reign after he has been solemnly anointed by the Patriarch it was stated that he "proceeded from God, and not from man," and that to him, the "supreme master of the universe, absolute obedience was due from all."[2]

795 797 177 It was this Messianic ideology of politico-religious proselytism and world salvation which had united the Church and the state that helped Byzantium to solidify its rule and to spread its influence and control over the neighboring countries. In conquered, dependent and friendly territories numerous bishoprics of Eastern rite were established whose function was to obtain the moral support of the people for the Byzantine ruler. The conquered people were allowed a certain degree of autonomy in their internal affairs and one of their privileges was the right of the use of their native language in church rituals.

This politico-religious expansionism, however, had its weaknesses. The only tie that linked the subjected and the dependent peoples with the central power was the Church. Thus, as soon as the central power and the authority of the Byzantine Emperor weakened as a result of internal feuds, palace revolutions, civil wars, and invasions, some petty local potentates saw a chance to emancipate themselves from Constantinople and proclaim themselves as sovereign rulers. Such a local lord following Byzantine traditions would appoint from his own kinsmen bishops and Patriarchs whose function was to anoint the new king, to bestow upon him God-like qualities, and to sanctify his despotic rule among the subjects.

795 797 648 793 It is this pattern of Church and state relations that also developed between Byzantium and Russia by the end of the tenth century, when as a result of a political alliance with Byzantium Prince Vladimir of Kiev was converted to Christianity.[3] A Greek Metropolitan and a number of Greek Orthodox bishops were subsequently sent to Russia. Having an eye on the control of all other Russian principalities, the Byzantine Church bestowed upon the Metropolitan of Kiev the authority over all Russian

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II

Following Byzantine traditions and being entirely dependent upon and identified with the dominant political power, the Russian Orthodox clergy supported the autocratic reign of Muscovite rulers by means of an apotheosis of the Czar. According to this theocratic ideology the role of the Church was to be the loyal ally and helper of the Czar who derived his authority directly from God. The Czar's judgment could be overruled by no prelate. In his effort, common with that of the Church to establish a divine order on the whole earth, the Czar had to be unconditionally supported.[6]

Native Russian, Byzantine and Turco-Mongol institutions and concepts were blended in this system of Russian imperial theocracy. According to the Mongol idea of imperial power the emperor was the owner of the body and of the property of each one of his subjects. He was, however, disinterested in their souls and conscience. Thus, as far as religious beliefs were concerned, the Mongol rulers showed a great deal of tolerance; being interested mainly in collecting the tributes and not in governing they did not look at religion and clergy as allies in ruling. The shamans among the Ural-Altaic peoples were not organized as a priestly class and the Mongol emperor, even after he had accepted Islam, did not see any potential threat to his imperial power in any religion. In that system of power there was a complete separation of religion and politics.

In Byzantium, on the other hand, the Church was a powerful and well-organized force with imperial ambitions. But the Church was subdued to the imperial and personal interests of the lay ruler. The Church often succeeded, however, in using the imperial power for its own ends. At the same time the Byzantine Emperor in legal theory did not rule in his own right, but derived his authority from the people. In legal theory, he was an elected monarch and was subjected to the supreme rule of law, even if the law emanated from him. There was thus in Byzantium a well established set of laws which bound equally the Emperor and his subjects and guaranteed also certain rights to the subjects.

the Monastery a great patriotic host came to its rescue under the leadership of a prince, a butcher, a monk and a Cossack, drove out the Poles, and established Michael as the first Tsar of the House of Romanov and his father Philaret as Patriarch. The House of Romanov was to last until the collapse of imperial Russia, and the advent of the Soviets. The Patriarchate was not so long lived. But in addition to Philaret himself it produced at least one outstanding figure in the vigorous personality of Nikon.

Nikon, of peasant origin, was a rigorist, vigorous and dominating, sincere and ascetic. As head of the Chudov monastery in Moscow he had been the close friend and adviser of the Tsar Alexis, the devout son and successor of Michael, for some years, when in 1652 with a good deal of reluctance and some stipulations he yielded to the Tsar's entreaties and accepted the Patriarchal Throne. Perhaps he foresaw that his own personality and conception of his duty as Patriarch were bound to clash with those of his friend and sovereign. Such in fact proved to be the case. Nikon felt himself bound in conscience to resist the encroachments of the secular power in the realm of spiritual affairs. But at the same time he had little scruple about intruding his own will into secular matters, where his harsh severity and arrogance made him many enemies among the boyars.

There was another aspect of the troubles which were to gather around Nikon and in the end overwhelm him. It was the question of the revision of the Service books of the Church —a thorny matter on which many men both in Russia and elsewhere have pricked their fingers.

The Old Slavonic books used by the Russian Church had been translated from the Greek, and in the course of centuries of transcribing, minor errors had inadvertently crept into the text. Beside these matters there were other questions in dispute, such as whether the sign of the Cross should be made with two fingers in the Russian manner or with three as the Greeks were accustomed to make it. And how often should Alleluia be sung on certain occasions? One may be pardoned some astonishment at the fury of the passions aroused by the mere discussion of these subjects. But this is to misunderstand. Men

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were not fighting about trivialities as such. In a sense nothing in the sphere of religion was a triviality. It is to overlook the fundamental fact that Orthodoxy was, and is, regarded by the Orthodox as one whole thing. To a man like Avvakum,[1] Orthodoxy, doctrine, rites, ceremonial, painting and music was one integrated whole. The slightest change in any detail was a breach in the fabric of Orthodoxy—and no such breach was to be tolerated at any price.

The question was not new in Nikon's day. A century before under Ivan the Terrible an attempt had been made to revise the Service books, and earlier still a learned Greek monk named Maxim had been brought to Moscow to undertake the work. The extraordinary history of that unhappy man reveals the intractable nature of the task in the atmosphere of ignorance, prejudice and passion which enveloped it. He came to Russia, as an invited guest, to carry out a work of scholarship. He spent thirty-eight years in Russia, twenty-six of them in captivity and sixteen in an actual dungeon, and for a long while excommunicate.

It did not ease the difficulty that the only standard by which the Russian books could be corrected was the corresponding Greek books. Russian ecclesiastics did not know Greek, and few, if any, wanted to know it. The Greeks were suspect, living now in the land of the infidel, and had they not surrendered to Western heresy at Florence, for which the judgment of God had swiftly overtaken them in 1453? Moscow was now the torch-bearer and champion of Orthodoxy, the third and final Rome, the guardian of the true faith.

No improvement in the Service books emerged from all this high feeling, and the matter cropped up again when Nikon became Patriarch. By nature an ardent reformer he would reform not only men but books.

The presence of Macarius the Patriarch of Antioch and his suite in Moscow presented an opportunity of which the Russian Patriarch was not slow to take advantage. Both informally and formally in a synod summoned for the purpose, he compared the Russian practice with the Greek and always accepted the latter as correcting the former, and the rulings

[1] See page 105.

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of the Greek visitors were acquiesced in. This did not add to Nikon's already scanty popularity, especially when he proclaimed with more honesty than tact: "I am a Russian and the son of a Russian but my faith and religion are Greek."

Even Avvakum had been prepared to amend the Russian books from the older Slavonic editions and manuscripts. But that was before Nikon's day as Patriarch, and when the latter proposed to appeal to the Greeks as the criterion, Avvakum and his friends from being moderate reformers went into the most violent and unappeasable opposition.

Avvakum was a remarkable man and he could write. He was in fact the most outstanding figure in Russian literature before Peter the Great. His autobiography which has been translated into English, should certainly be read. He defied the authorities with implacable obstinacy, goaded them with virulent abuse, suffered untold hardships as a consequence and in the end won the martyr's crown which he so eagerly desired.

In due course, the conflict between the ecclesiastical authorities and Avvakum's party (for he had many friends and sympathizers) developed into an open schism which has persisted to this day. Thus Russian Dissent, unlike English, owes its origin to opposition to reform, not to the advocacy of it. The Old Believers, as the dissenting party was called, became highly fissiparous and sometimes most eccentric. They suffered much persecution over a long period of time. "But on the whole," to quote Prince Mirsky,[1] "they have been the truest —in many cases the only—preservers of pre-Petrine Russian civilization. Were it not for them our contemporaries would hardly have rediscovered the Church music of Old Russia, nor the boundless wealth of its religious painting, which is the purest, strongest and most original flower of Old Russian civilization."

Nikon won against the Old Believers, but he lost against the nobility, which succeeded in detaching the sympathies of the Tsar from the Patriarch. The same Council which in 1667, in the presence of the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch,

[1] In his introduction to *The Life of the Archpriest Avvakum by Himself* The Hogarth Press, 1924.

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excommunicated the Old Believers, deposed Nikon himself and banished him into monastic seclusion.

The line of Patriarchs continued until 1700 when Adrian the last of the original succession died. By this time the dynamic personality of Peter the Great had appeared on the scene and inaugurated a new period in Russian history. In building the city on the Neva which bore his own name he opened his famous "window upon Europe" through which a hurricane blew which disturbed, scattered and rearranged many things in the life of the Russians. Peter admired all things Western and was determined to make Russia a great nation after the pattern of the West. So far as the Russian Church was concerned Peter's reforms had little if any effect in the sphere of doctrine, but he saw to it that bishops were appointed who sympathized or at least were ready to co-operate with his critical ideas on traditional Russian customs and who were willing to acquiesce in the subservience of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to his own autocratic will. Most important of all, he permitted no election of a successor to the Patriarch Adrian, and twenty-one years later abolished the Patriarchate altogether. The formal instrument by which this change was made was entitled the "Ecclesiastical Regulation". There were to be no more Patriarchs in Russia, instead the supreme authority in the Church was to be vested in a body formed on the German Lutheran model and known as the Holy Governing Synod.

This was no synod in the ordinary ecclesiastical sense of the word, but a committee whose members were appointed and dismissed at the will of the Tsar. In addition a secular official called the Procurator was appointed by the Emperor. This layman was not indeed a member of the synod, but his function was to supervise all its proceedings, and without his consent the synod could enact nothing, nor even choose what matters it should discuss. The bishops were dragooned into acceptance of this system, completely foreign as it was to the spirit of the Russian Church. Yet Peter's organization lasted until the collapse of the Empire in 1917.

It is an eloquent testimony to the dynamic force of Peter's personality that the impetus of his reforming movement survived his death. But it introduced deep cleavages and